

January 27, 2009

Members and Staff of the House Democratic Caucus,

It is abundantly clear that the people are appropriately demanding a high standard of ethics from their public servants.

As state representatives and legislative employees, we are keepers of the public trust. To meet the people's expectations, we must be vigilant of the fact that government service is a privilege.

To assist us, I will soon be asking various individuals and groups to participate in a series of occasional and ongoing Caucus briefings on the topic of ethics for public servants. I am hopeful that such briefings will expand our understanding and ensure our compliance with the laws, policies and public expectations when it comes to issues of good governance and leadership.

We have not set a schedule but I expect to invite to Caucus meetings various academicians, attorneys, former lawmakers and representatives from organizations like Common Caucus and the First Amendment Foundation. The goal is for us to obtain the necessary information for us to conduct the people's business in an open, honest, ethical and legal manner.

The House Democratic Caucus began this endeavor for ethics training immediately after the November organizational session. But ethics training is so important that we should make it an ongoing educational experience.

I'm reminded that President Barack Obama noted only days ago that public service is not a selfish responsibility. He said it is not about advancing the causes of friends and corporate clients. Nor is it, he said, about using one's office to promote the ideological agendas and special interests of any one organization. Rather, he said, public service is simply about advancing the interests of Americans.

Likewise, one of our nation's founders, Thomas Jefferson, once wrote: "Government should be judged by how well it meets its legitimate objectives. Good government is that which most effectively secures the rights of the people and the fruits of their labor, promotes their happiness, and does their will."

So, let's focus on the people's will. I urge you to renew your commitment to conducting Florida's business in an open, honest, ethical and legal manner. Please plan to participate in some of the briefings that will be scheduled for the House Democratic Caucus.

Respectfully,

Franklin Sands
House Democratic Leader

